The preparation for, and integration of professional graduates into the dynamic climate of the contemporary workplace today continues to challenge institutions of higher education and employers as well as administrators and labour policy makers across North America. The education of our contemporary workforce is a dynamic process that seeks to balance advanced professional concepts and ideals with work-role realities. The unavoidable space that exists between the educational ideal and the practice reality can be alarming and exhausting for the new graduate. The author (Duchscher, 2007) presents her model of Transition Shock© in which changing roles, relationships, responsibilities, and knowledge become critical catalysts in the development of a new graduate’s evolving professional identity during the initial 12 months of their practice. Two critical issues that feed into the experience of transition shock will be emphasized. Firstly, professional nursing practice is NOT as simple as the application of theory to ‘text book’ clinical events. Rather, the development of proficient practice habits results from: 1) the subtle integration of theory into varied practice experiences, 2) the maturation of one’s political, economic, organizational, cultural and socio-developmental insight, 3) the know-how that comes with collaboratively consulting with other nurses and healthcare professionals during the course of a day, and 4) the expertise that settles in as one both observes and participates in practice over time. Secondly, the transition shock experience is not an isolated professional experience. The response to a major change like the initial integration into a professional role affects the whole of the nurse: it is intellectual, physical, social, cultural, developmental, spiritual, emotional, and economic. While it is commonly accepted that there will be an adjustment when making a significant change in one’s life such as the initial integration into professional practice, what is often underestimated is the degree of pervasiveness of this experience. Duchscher brings over 16 years of research, innovation and direct experience in the area of new graduate professional role transition. With over 80 international presentations to multiple disciplines and 10 years as the CEO of a large Canadian non-profit organization that has served to support, sustain and develop leadership capacity in new professional nursing graduates, the author offers insights for educators on how to prepare professionals in a way that minimizes the stress they experience as they navigate this new context, while maximizing their early career clinical and professional contributions. Optimizing a smooth professional role transition for our graduates not only maximizes their effectiveness as representatives of a professional discipline, but offers them to our communities as ambassadors of higher education and champions of social responsibility within the work world.
Abstract Summary:
Duchscher’s model of Transition Shock speaks to the unavoidable space between educational ideals and the realities of professional nursing practice. The author offers pragmatic insights into changing roles, relationships, responsibilities, and knowledge in the development of a new graduates’ evolving professional identity during the initial 12 months of their practice.

Content Outline:

1. TRANSITION SHOCK
   - Discussion of transition shock - concept development origin and evolution
     - Marlene Kramer's 'Reality Shock' underpinnings
     - MN and PhD research findings
     - Nursing The Future organization as data feeder
   - Underlying motivations for transition shock
     - practice realities
     - inability to fully 'prepare' students for actual practice - reasons why
   - Primary elements of transition shock

2. FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES OF CONCERN
   - What are the primary challenges for new graduates transitioning
   - What are the recommendations to nursing managers for onboarding of new graduates
   - How can senior nursing mentors/preceptors and clinical educators assist the new graduate during transition

3. WHAT NEXT?
   - What are the author's next steps in terms of research?
   - What needs to be examined/explored to further our understanding of how to successfully transition and integrate new graduates into professional practice?

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Author Summary: Dr. Duchscher has committed herself to excellence in education, practice, research and leadership for the past 38 years. With over 20 national and international awards and scholarships, 18 peer-reviewed articles, 2 books, 5 book chapters and over 200 guest lectures throughout Canada, the United States, Australia and Asia on the topic of new nurse integration, she is considered one of the foremost experts on new nurse transition in North America.